

News Release



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New Director Selected For California State Railroad Museum

The California Department of Parks and Recreation has announced the appointment of Catherine A. Taylor as Director of the California State Railroad Museum. Ms. Taylor will assume her duties on May 1, 2002. Ruth Coleman, Acting DPR Director, released news of the selection April 18. "Cathy has the experience, the motivation, and the desire to lead the Railroad Museum through what promises to be an exciting time," Ms. Coleman said. "Her exceptional skills at managing complex undertakings while remaining focused on future development should serve the Museum well in the coming years."

Ms. Taylor has been actively involved with the California State Railroad Museum in a variety of capacities since 1982. She began her State Parks service as an interpretive volunteer, but rapidly began applying her considerable administrative and managerial abilities to Museum projects. She was the founding administrative manager of the Sacramento Southern Railroad (the Museum's operating excursion railroad), occupied several leadership positions with the Sacramento State Parks Docent Association, and was chair of the Museum's Docent Council. In 1990 she left her professional career as an advocate for a statewide healthcare association, becoming Executive Director of the California State Railroad Museum Foundation.

The CSRM Foundation is the nonprofit support arm of the California State Railroad Museum. During Ms. Taylor's tenure the Foundation has expanded from an organization with one staff member and a budget of less than \$100,000 into the largest Cooperating Association associated with California State Parks. Today the Foundation has some 34 employees, oversees a variety of activities and operations in Sacramento and Jamestown, California, and has an annual budget of \$3.2 million.

Located within Old Sacramento State Historic Park, the California State Railroad Museum complex includes the 100,000-square foot Museum of Railroad History plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill buildings. The Museum also manages Railtown 1897 State Historic Park in Jamestown, another railroad heritage unit of the California State Parks system. With annual attendance exceeding 500,000, the Museum is the world's most-visited railroad museum, and an internationally recognized Sacramento attraction.

“Cathy Taylor is the ideal choice to lead the Museum into its next period of growth” said California State Archivist Walter Gray. “She possesses extraordinary energy, has outstanding qualities as a planner and advocate, knows how to make things happen, and has clearly demonstrated her commitment to the Museum and to the values of California State Parks through her years of effective work. This is the logical next step for Cathy, and for the Museum. I am happy for both.” Gray was Railroad Museum Director from 1990 to 1998, and worked closely with Ms. Taylor on programs such the Museum’s distinctive *Railfairs* in 1991 and 1999.

Ms. Taylor received her B.A. in history from California State University, Sacramento, and is a 1998 graduate of the prestigious Museum Management Institute sponsored by the Getty Leadership Institute. She is active in the museum profession, serves as president of the Sacramento Association of Museums, is a past director of the Tourist Railroad Association, and is a proponent on behalf of museum issues for California State Parks, the Association of Railway Museums, the California Association of Museums, and the American Association of Museums. She is frequently sought as a consultant in the areas of planning, organizational development and special events by railroad and technology museums, tourist railroads, and preservation organizations.

The California State Railroad Museum is poised to embark on a period of significant expansion. Major initiatives during the next several years include final development of the long-planned Railroad Technology Museum in the former Southern Pacific Railroad Sacramento Shops, a \$25 million expansion project located just north of the Museum’s current Old Sacramento complex. Other major initiatives include increasing the Museum’s ability to serve new and expanded audiences reflecting California’s diversity, and ensuring that all of the Museum’s programs and activities meet the highest current standards.

“I’m looking forward to the many challenges this organization will face in the coming years,” said Ms. Taylor. “With the support of California State Parks’ executive leadership, the Museum Foundation Board, and the paid and volunteer staff of the Railroad Museum and Foundation, I am confident that we can achieve the vision set forth when the Museum was first conceived in the late 1960s. We will continue to work with the City and County of Sacramento, the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Sacramento Metro Chamber, and the many other individuals and organizations that have supported the Museum over the years.”

Christopher Houser, Chairman of the California State Railroad Museum Foundation, is enthusiastic about the shift in personnel. “Cathy has built the Railroad Museum Foundation into a powerhouse, the model of how a State Parks cooperating association can operate. She knows both the nonprofit side and the State Parks side of the Museum, and we look forward to great things during her tenure as Museum Director. The next few years will be very exciting,” Mr. Houser commented.

Operated by California State Parks with assistance from the CSRM Foundation, the California State Railroad Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. Widely regarded as North America’s finest and most-visited railroad museum, the complex of facilities includes the 100,000-square foot Museum of Railroad History plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill buildings in Old Sacramento. Also affiliated with the Museum is Railtown 1897 State Historic Park in Jamestown. For 24-hour information, call (916) 445-6645 or visit www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org # # #